NUMB. CVIII.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

Juſtum & Tenacem propoſiti Virum. HOR.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2. 1725.

DEſigning to be grave to Day, on the ſober Subject of RESOLUTION, I will bribe my Reader's Attention, to a Diſcourſe, leſs *gay*, than *uſeful*, by telling them a ſhort *Story*, in the very Front of my Paper.

Saladin, the *Soldan* of *Ægypt*, though he had Dominions enough, of his own, was always ready, when Occaſion offered, to *make free* with other People's. ——At his Return, without Succeſs, from the Siege of *Moſoul*, in *Syria*, he ſeized into his Hands the whole Lordſhip of *Emeſſa* in Prejudice to the Right of *Naſir-Eddin*, the young Prince, who claimed it. And *this* he did, upon Pretence, That the late *Father* of the Youth had *forfeited*; by giving Countenance to Confederacies againſt the *Soldan*'s Intereſt

Saladin, however, ordered, That proper Care ſhould be taken, of the injur'd Prince's Education: and being deſirous to obſerve, what Progreſs he made in his Studies, he was brought, one Day, before the *Soldan*; who aſked him, with much Gravity, *In what Part of the Alcoran he was Reading?* —— I am come, Sir, reply'd the young Prince (to the *Surprize of all*, who were near him) to that Verſe, which informs me, That *He* who *devours* the *Eſtates* of ORPHANS, is not a *King*, but a *Tyrant*.

The *Soldan* was much ſtartled at the Turn, and Spirit, of his *Repartee*: but, after ſome Pauſe, and Recollection, return'd the Youth this generous Anſwer ——He, who *ſpeaks*, with ſuch *Reſolution*, would *act* with ſo much *Courage*, that I *reſtore* you to your Father's Poſſeſſions, leſt I ſhould be thought to ſtand in *Fear* of a Virtue, which I only *reverence*.

Such an Influence has *Firmneſs*, even in *Words*, and *Appearance!* But, when reduced into *Practice*, it is productive of *innumerable Benefits*: So that, were I to be asked by a Man of Senſe, *Which would be his ſhorteſt Road, to Felicity*; My Anſwer ſhould be, The Path, which leads thro' *Conſtancy* and *Reſolution*: No other *Road*, but this! and no other *Guide*, than *Conſcience*, can carry him *through* his Journey, and bring him *ſafe* to the *End* he aims at.

Reſolution in *Life*, is like *Action* in *Oratory*; as *Demoſthenes* deſcribed it: It is the *Firſt*, *Second*, and *Third* Thing neceſſary. The Soul is endowed with Three powerful Faculties; the *Underſtanding*, the *Memory*, and the *Will*; but, with regard to *moral Life*, they all Three lie *dead*, without the Help of *Reſolution*. Reſolution is their *Parent*, their *Midwife*, and their *Nurſe*. It firſt impregnates them with *Activity*; then *delivers* them in their *Labours*; and *nouriſhes* the Effects of thoſe Labours with *Perſeverance*. What imports it, to *know* either the *Good* or the *Proper*, if we *forget* or *over-look* that Knowledge? or, to what End do we *remember*, what is Great, and Heroick in others, if *Reſolution* does not conform our Will to co-operate with our Underſtanding?

Reſolution therefore is the ſpiritual Union of the Mind's beſt Faculties: and may, not improperly, be called the *Soul* of the very *Soul* itſelf. —— It exerciſes the Underſtanding into *Meditation*; Meditation gives Life to Memory; and reduces *Good Will* into Habit; and Habitual Good Will inſpires the Memory and Underſtanding to break beautifully forth, into a Series of *good Actions*.

For this Reaſon I have often reflected, that we ſtand more in Need of being *reminded*, than of being *taught*; and that, whoever would lead Men to be *good*, that is, to be *happy*; ſhould rather inſpire them with Reſolution to *do* what they know to be right, than to learn, *what it is* to do rightly. Moral Arguments ſhould be chiefly applied to the *Memory*, and are *Incentives* to the *Will*, rather than *Aids* to the *Underſtanding*.

This is evident, methinks, from the following Conſiderations; *Wiſdom*, as it regards practical Life, is no more than a Faculty of diſcerning what is Good, from what is Evil; what is to be embraced, and what rejected. —— Now if the wiſeſt Man upon Earth, by the Dint only of *Reſolution*, could bring himſelf to *practiſe*, what a Man of the moſt moderate Faculties, *comprehends* and *diſtinguiſhes*, he would indeed, be a *wiſe Man*, according to the genuine Signification. But, as the World goes, were we ſtrictly to meaſure the Capacities, even of the *Wiſeſt*, by their *Actions*, we ſhould be mortified into a Neceſſity of conſidering this vaſt Globe, but as a Stage full of *buſy Fools*, with ſcarce a ſteady Purpoſe among them. And, however the Philoſophers may have declared a *Vacuum* an Abſurdity in *Nature*; we ſhould, plainly, diſcover one, in *Senſe*, among the Agents of the intellectual World; We muſt therefore conclude, That the Fault lies not in the *Underſtanding*, but the *Will*; nor proceeds from Want of Knowledge, but Deficiency of Firmneſs, and Reſolution. Mr. DRYDEN, ſpeaking of Men in their *thinking* and *contemplative* Faculty, ſays ſomewhere, to the Praiſe of the *meaneſt* Writers, That he never read any Argument ſo *indifferently* handled, but, of which a *wiſe* Man might not gather ſomething, that was *valuable*: And *Cardinal* RICHELIEU, has obſerved, concerning *active* and *political* Life, That he knew many, to whom the Direction of great *Kingdoms* might be happily committed in the *Morning*, whom, yet, in the *Afternoon*, he would ſcarce truſt with the *Adminiſtration* of his *Hen-rooſt*.

A little

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A little common Thief knows he *ſhould not* commit Injuſtice; and underſtands well enough, when he commits it —— but, wanting *Reſolution* to be *publickly* neeay, rather than *privately diſhoneſt*, he deviates from the *real* Good; and ventures upon the *appearing*. —— How often has the *Judge* acted the *Felon* upon the Bench, and robb'd before *their* Faces, who *accuſe Robbers* at his Tribunal! He *dares commit* the very Crime which he is ſeated there, to condemn; But he wants *Reſolution* to deſpiſe the Bribe, though he has not the Felon's *Neceſſity* to plead in Excuſe of it: The poor Thief in this Caſe, as *ſilly* as he looks at the *Bar*, ſtands in Need of no *Inſtructor*. But the Judge himſelf, as *wiſe* as he appears, in his *Furs*, wants a *Remembrancer* at his Elbow, to put him in Mind of his Duty.

Common Gameſters, know ſo well the Ignominy of giving *falſe Judgment*, at a publick *Hazard-Table*, that they have generally *Reſolution* enough to reſiſt very great ſecret Temptations that Way; and have ſeldom been found guilty, though *Cuſtom*, and not *Conſcience*, is the Motive of their Forbearance. But, how *little Hiſtory* need we read, to know, That we have had Diſpenſers of Equity, who have been in the utmoſt *Neceſſity* of Plain-dealing *Monitors*, not indeed to *inſtruct* them; but to put them in *Mind*, that *Equity was not Iniquity*. —— We *all* of us *know*, but *few*, or *none* of us *think*. —— We diſtinguiſh not the Things that lie *before* us, through the *Miſtineſs* of *Avarice*, or any other intervening Paſſion. It cannot be ſaid, that we are unable to *ſee*: But that we *ſee* without *Diſcernment*. —— The *Underſtanding* has *Eyes*, but *Irreſolution* has *jaundic'd* them.

How does *Ambition* reduce and miſlead thoſe, whom we call *wiſe* Men, into aukward Condeſcenſions, which make them cheap in the very Eyes of the *Vulgar*? How often have we ſeen *Pride*, and *Inſolence* aſſume the Flexure of the *ſneaking Candidate*, in order to *ſtrut* immediately after, in the Abuſe of intruſted *Office*? The *Farce of* Doctor Faustus has been repreſented as *light*, and *ridiculous*, becauſe, its *Plot* is *no more*, than that, while the *Conjurer* enjoys his *Wand*, he enjoys his Wiſhes: *That Wand* converts every Thing into the Accompliſhment of his Purpoſes; But no ſooner is his *Term*, of holding that *White Staff*, *expired*; than the *Conjuration expires* with it; and he is the pooreſt, weakeſt, moſt deſpairing, and moſt abandon'd Wretch alive. This, every Spectator ſees *through*, and *laughs* at; and yet, how happy might it have been for ſome other *Wand-holders*, of this Kingdom, if that poor *Farce* had been acted before them, inſtead of *their* duller *State-Interludes*, in order to ſerve as a uſeful *Memorial*, that they ſhould not miſuſe *thoſe Wands* like Faustus; that is, play Tricks, till their *Time is out*, and then be *delivered up* to the *Devil*.

As *little* Men become *great* by *Reſolution*, and *great Men* degenerate into *little* ones without it; ſo *Admonitions*, to thoſe Duties, which every *little Man* knows, are *neceſſary* notwithſtanding, to the *Wiſeſt*; Of this Alexander's Father, Philip, demonſtrated himſelf very ſenſible; That Prince's *Servant*, *knew*, no doubt, as well as his *Maſter*, that a *King* was no more than a *Man*: But Philip, mindful, that high Fortune had often made *light Heads forget* themſelves, commanded this Servant to wake him every Morning, by this well-known Leſſon in his Ear; —— *Remember thou art but a Man.* ——Now, many would be apt to imagine, that little Profit could ariſe from ſuch conſtant Repetition of this ſhort and needleſs Intimation: yet Sir Francis Bacon, who *knew* well both the *great* World and the *little*, has left us the following *Axiom* concerning it: "All (*monitorial*) Precepts "concerning *Kings*, are, in Effect, comprehended in "theſe Two *Remembrances*; — *Remember thou art* "*a Man*; — *Remember thou art* God's *Vicegerent*. The "*one* bridleth their *Power*, the other their *Will*." —— In Truth, if Alexander had affected to be no more than he was, the Son of Philip, inſtead of aſpiring to Divinity and the Title of Ammon; he would have *more* than conquer'd the World; for he would have conquered the very Conqueror of it.

Reſolution then, is the only Means to make a Man compleatly *happy*; and frequent *Admonition* ſerves to keep *Reſolution* alive. The *Loweſt* can ſcarce ſtand in Need of a moral *Inſtruction*; but the *Higheſt* may be greatly indebted for *Admonition*; and conſequently, all young Men, who propoſe to make any Figure in publick Employments, ſhould give Ear, to a *Plain-Dealer*, who dares put them in Mind of their Weakneſs. —— A Man who has Firmneſs enough to *ſee* the *Worſt* of his own Soul, will ſoon have the Satisfaction to find the Proſpect much *better'd*. He will learn Patience in *ill* Fortune, and Abſtinence in *good*; He will be fortified with *Reſolution*, to be *humble*, *juſt*, and *charitable*, amidſt the ſtrongeſt *Inflations*, and Indulgements of *Proſperity*: and diſdain to be found *envious*, *dejected*, or *revengeful*, amidſt the *bittereſt* Reſentments, and Sollicitations of *Calamity*. Such a Man ſhall not only preſerve an inward Tranquillity; but, whatever the Colour of his Fortune may be, he will owe a Luſtre to *Himſelf*, and caſt it round him upon *Others*. He will not only be *followed*, but *beloved* in his *Proſperity*; and in his *Adverſity* he will be *lamented*.

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